

REMARKS

The Examiner's final Office Action of November 17, 2003 has been received and its contents reviewed. Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the consideration given to the above-identified application.

By the above actions, claim 1 has been amended. Accordingly, claims 1 and 2 are pending for consideration, of which claim 1 is independent.

Referring now to the detailed Office Action, claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as unpatentable over JP 04124520 (hereafter JP '520). This rejection is respectfully traversed at least for the reasons provided below.

As amended, claim 1 further clarifies that the projecting portion and the recessed portion are engaged with each other when the inner cylindrical body and the outer cylindrical body relatively rotate about the cylinder axis or are relatively displaced in the radial direction. More specifically, the projecting portion regulates relative displacement between the inner cylindrical body and the outer cylindrical body by engaging with the recessed portion of the outer cylindrical body. Hence, a feature of the presently claimed invention includes a rubber elastic body having the projecting portion engaging into the recessed portion of the outer cylindrical body. Support for the amendment of claim 1 can be found in, e.g., Figs. 1-3 of the present application.

On the other hand, JP '520 discloses a projecting portion (8) on a rubber elastic body. However, the projecting portion (8) engages into a stopper member (9), and not into a recessed portion (7) of an outer cylindrical body. Thus, the projecting portion (8) does not regulate relative displacement between the inner cylindrical body and the outer cylindrical body. Hence, the function, as well as structure, of the projection portion of the presently claimed invention is different from that of the projection portion of JP '520.

Consequently, since each and every feature of the present claims is not taught (and is not inherent) in the teachings of JP '520, as is required by MPEP Chapter 2131 in order to establish anticipation, the rejection of claims 1-2, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as anticipated by JP '520 is improper.

In view of the amendments and arguments set forth above, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the §102(b) rejection of claims 1 and 2.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with Applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,


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